

FAIR HOUSING

Update

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July 2004

Washington State Agencies Win National Awards

By Dixie Shaw, Fair Housing Center of South Puget Sound and Roxanne Vierra, King County Office of Civil Rights

On June 16, 2004, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) held its Fair Housing Awards Dinner at the National Fair Housing Training Conference and Housing Policy Summit in Washington D.C. Two Washington state fair housing agencies were the recipients of national awards recognizing the agencies achievements in fair housing work--the King County Office of Civil Rights and the Fair Housing Center of South Puget Sound.

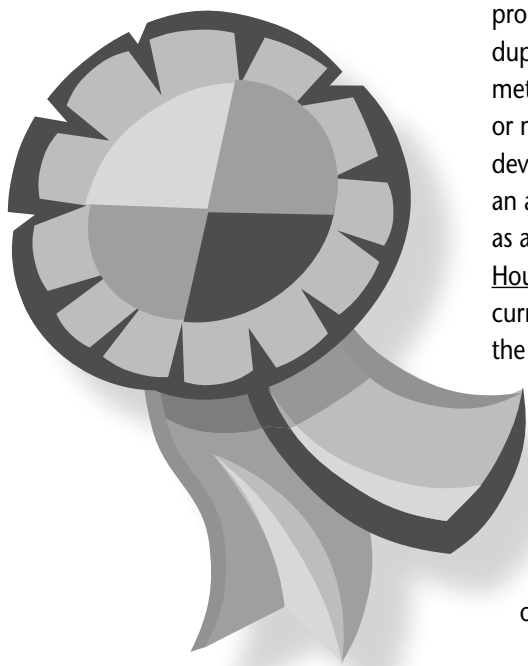
Innovation Award Presented to Fair Housing Center of South Puget Sound

The Fair Housing Center of South Puget Sound received one of four national HUD awards for Fair Housing Initiative Programs (FHIP). The FHIP Innovation Award was given to the Fair Housing Center for exhibiting creativity and unique versatility in addressing programs or in developing testing or research projects. To receive this award, an agency's program or research must be able to be duplicated in other areas through a clear methodology, tool, program project or model. The Fair Housing Center developed and successfully implemented an award winning fair housing English as a Second Language (ESL) Fair Housing: Understanding Your Rights© curriculum in ESL classrooms throughout the state. Utilizing HUD FHIP funding, and partnering with a local technical college, the curriculum was developed to educate immigrants on identifying housing discrimination and understanding fair housing laws and enforcement options.

The Fair Housing Center has worked with numerous ESL instructors throughout Washington State to utilize the fair housing ESL curriculum and it has been well received by instructors and students alike. Its use has increased immigrant complaint calls to the agency, an increase not previously realized by traditional education and outreach programs. Because of the curriculum's success, it is now being expanded for use in Oregon and Idaho. For more information related to the Fair Housing: Understanding Your Rights© ESL curriculum or other agency programs, please contact Dixie Shaw at 253-274-9523 or toll free at 888-766-8800.

King County Office of Civil Rights Wins Partnership Award

The King County Office of Civil Rights has taken the leadership role in a unique and highly successful partnership of the four Washington State Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) agencies and the two FHIP agencies. The Partnership Award is given to an agency that demonstrates an effective use of partnerships among government



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Awards

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agencies, nonprofit organizations, or private business, including the facilitation of information sharing. What distinguishes this partnership from other agencies in the country are the many other collaborative efforts of the Washington agencies.

King County Office of Civil Rights has coordinated a quarterly meeting of all of the Washington FHAPs and FHIPs, with rotating hosts, where the agencies plan joint activities and discuss matters of mutual concern. Activities in which all of the organizations have participated in the last year as partners are:

- Delivery of quarterly training sessions for housing providers and respondents to discrimination complaints, with critiques by professional trainers;
- Publication of a quarterly newsletter sent to housing providers and advocacy organizations throughout the state;
- Development of a sample policy on disability accommodations;
- Development of a "100 Questions for Property Managers and Landlords" guidebook on rights and responsibilities under the fair housing laws;
- Formation of a Partnership TRO project, which allowed for all TRO requests to be sent to one designated staff person and agency collaboration;
- Participation in the annual property management "TRENDS" conference typically attended by more than 1700 property management staff and most recently in a similar trade show for the real estate industry.

For more information related to the workshop programs and training materials mentioned here, please contact Roxanne Vierra at 206-296-7705 or e-mail to roxanne.vierra@metrokc.gov.

Questions & Answers

The Blackberry Ridge complex has several applicants competing for the same apartment. Can the manager choose the applicant she believes will be the best, based on her experience?

Some individuals who "look" okay turn out to be bad tenants; however, a housing provider working on assumptions and experience alone won't know that until after entering into a lease agreement. You will have more consistent results and fewer discrimination complaints if you establish a fair screening process for all prospective tenants and apply it equally to all. It's best to screen applicants on a first-come, first-served basis. Stop screening when you reach a qualified applicant who meets the screening criteria, and offer the unit to that applicant. It's a good idea to date and time-stamp the applications so you know the exact order in which you received them. Pre-printed documents will help to ensure that you are gathering the same information from every applicant, and that you aren't asking for any inappropriate information.

The posted pool rules for the Rainbow Apartments give separate swim hours for children and for adults. Is this in compliance with fair housing laws?

Pool rules should be reasonable for the use and enjoyment of all tenants. Under fair housing laws, "adult swim" hours are not permitted. In accordance with Washington State Law (WAC 246-260-100), when no lifeguard or attendant is present at a pool, children 12 years or younger must have a responsible adult (18 or older) present. It is permissible to require that children between the ages of 13-17 have at least one other person present who is 13 or older (this is the buddy system, with a second person to provide rescue or call for help).

Some areas might be dangerous for very young children, such as saunas or hot tubs. Be aware of applicable building and safety codes, and consult with the appropriate local, state or federal agency for guidance. Washington State Law (WAC 388-148-0170) requires "age and developmentally appropriate supervision of any child that uses hot tubs, swimming pools, spas, and other man-made and natural bodies of water." Housing providers who decide to post an area as requiring adult supervision should be careful not to establish unnecessary restrictions (for example, rules excluding everyone under 18 years old would likely be too strict). Under this law, you can establish lower age limits for use of saunas or hot tubs than you would for swimming pools.

The City of Tacoma's Best Kept Secret:

The 18th Annual Fair Housing Conference

Contact: Jennifer Lesmez, City of Tacoma Compliance Division, HUD Contract Manager, 253-594-7843

Do Predatory Lending, Victim Protection in Rental Housing, Tenant on Tenant Harassment, Reasonable Accommodation and Service Animals, Crime Free Housing, and Advertising for Property Owners and Managers sound familiar? They should since these and other topics were the courses and workshops that were offered at the City of Tacoma Human Rights and Human Services 18th Annual Fair Housing Conference on April 21, 2004 at the Sheraton Hotel and Convention Center in Tacoma.

The day's events were graciously hosted by Tacoma Human Rights Commissioner, Alice Currie. John Briehl, Director of Human Rights and Human Services began the day's events by delivering

an inspirational message confirming the City's commitment to continue to provide leadership and support in eliminating discrimination and prejudice in housing through enforcement of the Fair Housing Act, the City's Ordinance against Discrimination and through education and outreach. City Manager, Jim Walton, affirmed the City's commitment to protect individual rights through enforcement efforts under the Fair Housing Act by investigating predatory lending issues through the elimination of barriers that minorities and others protected by fair housing laws face when seeking credit. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was represented by, Karen Newton, HUD Deputy Assistant Secretary, Operations and Management, who provided the keynote address and by John Meyers, Regional Director for HUD, who eloquently shared with the audience HUD's mission to end discrimination in housing.

Close to two-hundred participants were treated to a full day's schedule of classes and workshops focusing around the Fair Housing Act and the City of Tacoma's

Ordinance Against Discrimination in Housing. The days event included an all you can eat fajita bar and a traditional Samoan dance performed by a very talented group of young performers. A highlight for participants was the Fair Housing Conference Notebook that was provided to each person in attendance that included a copy of the House Bill 1645 that was recently passed by the Washington State Legislature related to the protection of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking in the rental of housing. Before the Conference many participants were not even aware of this new State law.

This years Fair Housing Conference was made possible with the support from the City of Tacoma, HUD and the many presenters who graciously volunteered their time to conduct the workshops. Plans are already under way for the next Fair Housing Conference in Tacoma that will be held in April 2005 along with some exciting additions to the Conference that are being developed to increase awareness of the Fair Housing Act.



Receive this publication via e-mail

Fax the following information to 253-591-5050

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Property: _____

Upcoming Events

September 15 & 16, 2004 Crime Free Housing Program

City of Tacoma
Central Wastewater Treatment Facility
Transmission Conference Room
2201 Portland Avenue
Tacoma, Wa 98421
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
For additional information contact Mary
Beth Riggs at 253-591-5160

How to reach us

Fair Housing Center of South Puget Sound

253-274-9523 / 1-888-766-8800
TTY 253-274-9523

King County Office of Civil Rights

206-296-7592, TTY 206-296-7596
Website: www.metrokc.gov/dias/ocre

Northwest Fair Housing Alliance

509-325-2665 / 1-800-200-FAIR

Seattle Office for Civil Rights

206-684-4500, TTY 206-684-4503
Website: www.cityofseattle.net/civilrights

Tacoma Human Rights and Human Services Dept.

253-591-5151, TTY 253-591-5153
Website: www.cityoftacoma.org/HRHS

U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development

206-220-5170, TTY 206-220-5185
Website: www.hud.gov/offices/fheo

Washington State

Human Rights Commission

360-753-6770 / 1-800-233-3247
TTY 1-800-300-7525

Website: www.wa.gov.hrc

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City of Tacoma
Human Rights and Human Services Department
747 Market Street, Room 836
Tacoma, WA 98402-3779

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